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ABSTRACT

A study investigated one way in which teachers can focus on more than children's products and writing processes by examining their social processes as well, specifically the health of the classroom communities and the individual children's comfort within those communities. Under the supervision of the same teacher, "journal time" in three classes (kindergarten, first/second grade, and second/third grade in an urban, socially and ethnically diverse school) was observed twice a week for 5 months during 1985 and 4 months during 1986. Although approximately 80 students were observed, the study focused closely on eight students, four kindergartners and four first-graders. Children's talk was audiotaped, observational notes on their behavior were recorded, and all journals were photocopied. Case studies of two of the students illustrate the notion of multiple worlds, where writing could appear in the contexts of an imaginary world, a present social world, and a wider experienced world. In these contexts, writing developed as it became embedded in the children's lives, and as it became a way of understanding their own experiences and of interacting with others. (Examples of students' drawing and writing are included, and eight references are appended.) (MM)

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# Center for the Study of Writing

Occasional Paper No. 3

## DRAWING, TALKING AND WRITING: RETHINKING WRITING DEVELOPMENT

Anne Haas Dyson

February, 1988

University of California, Berkeley
Carnegie Mellon University

CS211098

# CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WRITING

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# DRAWING, TALKING, AND WRITING: RETHINKING WRITING DEVELOPMENT

**By**

**Anne Haas Dyson**
**University of California, Berkeley**

Six-year-old Maggie was having some difficulty figuring out what to write. So, she made a chain by hooking colored markers together end-to-end, balanced the chain on her head, and called it her "thinking cap." Her friend Manuel was impressed by that cap:

Manuel: Thanks for making red the first color.

Maggie: Why?

Manuel: Because it's my favorite color.

. . .

Maggie: Purple's mine. Purple's at the end.

Manuel: Unless you look at it in another way.

Adult: Then where would purple be?

Manuel: At the beginning.

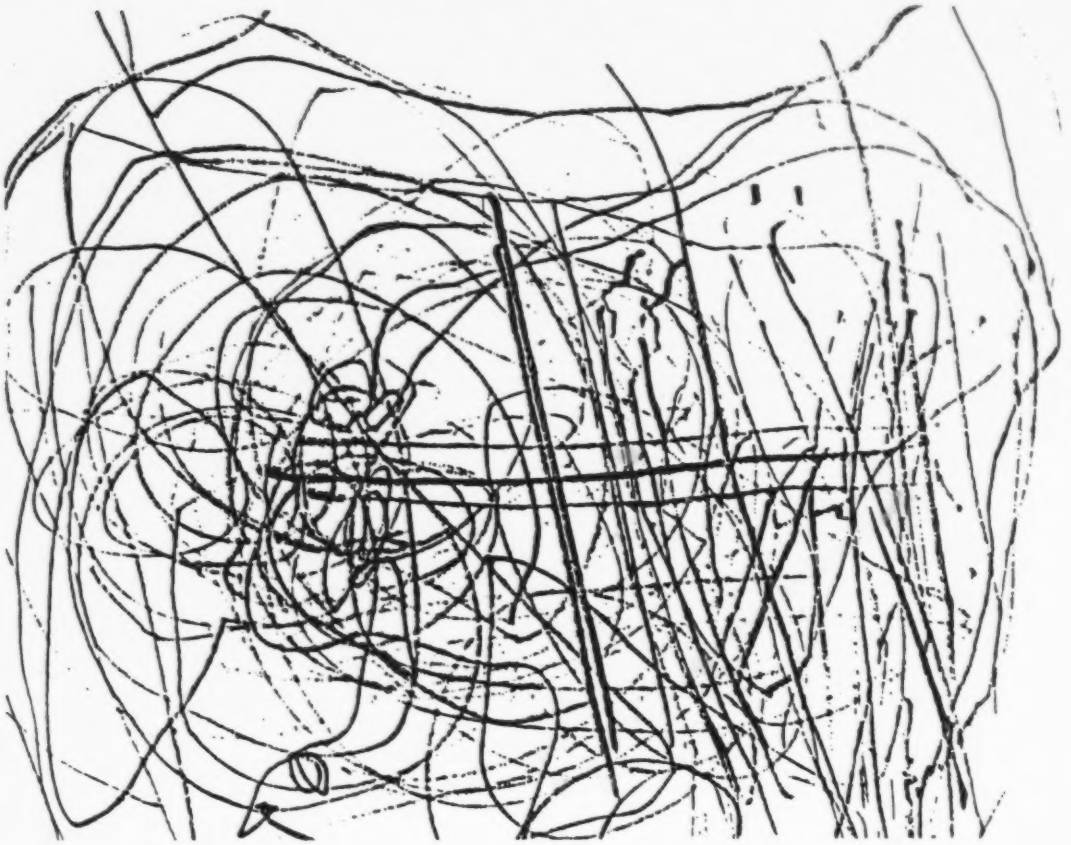
Inspired by Manuel, Maggie, and their peers, in this paper I hope to offer a new way of looking at beginnings and ends--not the beginnings and ends of thinking caps, but the beginnings and end goals of school writing growth.

Manuel and Maggie are just two of the children I met in January of 1985 when I visited their school and met their teacher, Margaret. Their school is an urban magnet school that attracts children from across a socially and ethnically diverse city. Margaret taught all the children language arts, and they all--kindergarteners through third graders--had journals, journals full of the children's imaginative texts. Margaret's classroom, then, presented the opportunity to study child writers over their early school years, as they engaged in a similar activity, with the same teacher, and with largely the same peers.

When I arrived that first morning, however, it was not the writing that I noticed. Margaret's classroom was full of children talking and drawing. There was writing too, but the writing was not initially as colorful, as compelling--or as noisy--as those other symbolic media, pictures and speech.

For example, Jesse, a kindergartener, acted out an elaborate drama as he drew the piece in Figure 1:

FIGURE 1
Jesse's Motorcycle Guy



> ERRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR [the soundof a motorcycle being driven]. And he falls off, and he hurts himself, and he gets back up. [And so the motorcycle racer continued on the winding track.]

Jesse's soon-dictated text, though, lacked this sense of drama:

> This is a motorcycle guy.
> And then the motorcycle guy won.

Over time, as many scholars have pointed out, one of children's developmental challenges is to get more of their meaning--more of their story--into their writing, rather than only into their drawing and their talking with themselves and their friends. Children must "disembed" or "decontextualize" their written texts; that is, they must construct meaningful texts that can stand on their own, separate from the context of other symbolic media or other people (Donaldson, 1978; Olson, 1977).

Taking my cue from Manuel, I'd like to suggest another perspective--that in the beginning, in this common school task of drawing pictures and making up "stories," children's written texts are often afterthoughts; they are, in fact, often *not* embedded in their social and intellectual lives. Brian and Sara, two kindergarteners I once knew, expressed the sentiment well:

Brian: Why do we always have to write words? (Translation: Why can't we just write the pictures?)

Teacher: Well, I like to see what you're going to write.

Sara: Why can't you just ask us?

To develop as writers and, especially, story writers, all children must find reasons for not just writing the pictures. As I learned from Margaret and her class, children's written texts must become progressively *more* embedded within--more involved with--their artistic, social, and wider experienced worlds.

And this, after all, is the way it is for adults who write stories. They do not really function as isolated, disembedded souls producing disembedded text worlds. Rather, authors move among different worlds, different space/time structures, including the imaginary worlds they are forming, the ongoing social world within which they are acting, and the wider world of experiences that they are drawing upon. One minute they are the directors of an imaginary plot, organizing characters and actions; then, they are deep in that imaginary world, actors speaking a character's words, feeling a character's emotions. Then they may move inside their remembered worlds, reliving their own past experiences where the roots of their story may lie. Then, anticipating the future, they may adjust their words and phrases, trying to ease interaction with their real-world readers. Authors move among symbolic worlds as well; they may try to draw word pictures or to find the rhythm and timbre of word notes (Tannen, 1987). Thus, learning to compose a story is not simply learning to construct a kind of independent, coherent text world, one with an appropriate beginning, middle, end. The challenge of story writers is to find, in Polanyi's (1982, p. 169) words, a "place to stand" among multiple symbolic and social worlds.

In this paper, I present the case histories of two children I met in Margaret's classroom, Jake and Mitzi. I hope to illustrate, first, how, over a two-year period, the children began to use their imaginative texts--their symbolic worlds--to interact with their peers and to organize and evaluate their own experiences. The children's texts became more embedded in their ongoing social world and the wider world of experiences. Second, I aim to suggest that this embedding was supported both by the social structure of the classroom and by the children's spontaneous interest in each other's work. A complex dialectic evolved between the children's graphic activity and their interactions with each other, and that dialectic--that two-way process--helped the children begin to write in new ways. Most dramatically, the children and their peers began to interact *within* as well as *about* their texts. Finally, I intend to illustrate the tensions that resulted as the children's text worlds came in closer and more deliberate contact with their social world and with their reflections on the real world--and, also, how the children began to resolve those tensions. Before telling you about Jake and Mitzi, though, let me explain in more detail how I came to know them and how I constructed their cases.

## THE DATA BASE: MARGARET AND HER CHILDREN

I observed journal time in Margaret's classroom an average of twice per week for five months during 1985 and for four months during 1986. During the course of each morning approximately 80 children came through Margaret's room--a kindergarten class, a first/second grade class, and a second/third grade class. For each class, Margaret's language arts program centered around the journals, in which the children drew and wrote daily. During journal time, Margaret circulated, talking to the children about their ideas and the mechanics of production and, in the kindergarten, acting as a scribe for their dictations.

As Margaret and the children worked, my assistants, Carol Heller and Mary Gardner, and I audiotaped the children's talk, took handwritten observational notes on their behaviors, and collected completed journals for photocopying. In all we collected 144 hours of audiotaped data and 346 written products. While we came to know all the children, we focused on eight, four of whom I followed closely from the first through the second grade and four of whom I followed from kindergarten through first. The four kindergarteners were Maggie, Regina, Jesse, and Rueben; the four first graders were Mitzi, Sonia, Jake, and Manuel (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
Age, Gender, and Ethnicity of Focal Children

| | *Age*[1] | *Gender* | *Ethnicity* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kindergarteners | | | |
| Maggie | 5.0 | Female | Anglo |
| Regina | 6.0 | Female | Black |
| Jesse | 5.6 | Male | Anglo |
| Rueben | 5.10 | Male | Hispanic |
| First Graders | | | |
| Sonia | 6.2 | Female | Hispanic |
| Mitzi[2] | 6.3 | Female | Anglo |
| Jake | 6.5 | Male | Black/Anglo |
| Manuel | 7.3 | Male | Hispanic/Anglo |

1 Age as of January 1, 1985 (given in Years.Months).
2 During the observations from February through May, 1986, Mitzi was not in the same classroom as the other seven children.

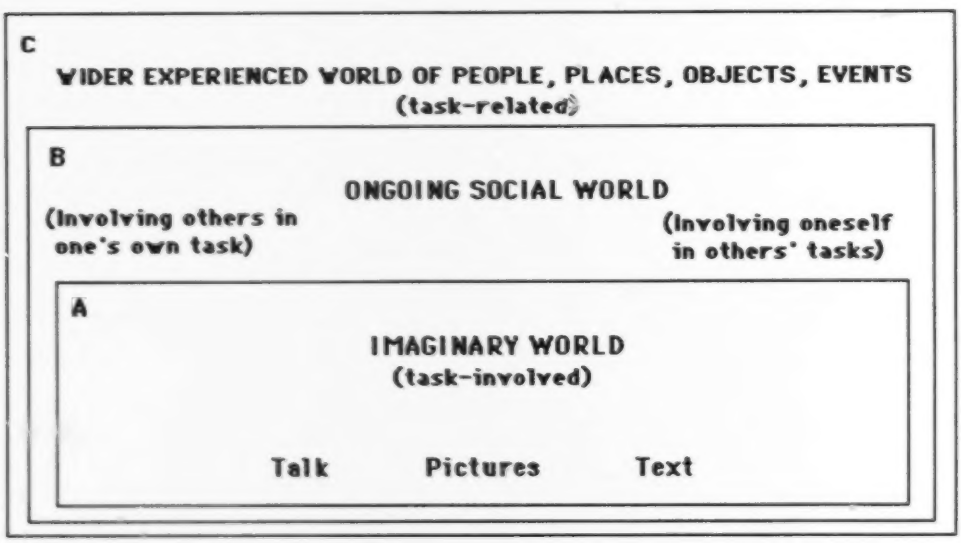
All of these children were judged by Margaret to fall within the range of "normal," both academically and emotionally. But they had very different artistic and social styles, as Jake and Mitzi will illustrate. (For a discussion of these differences, see Dyson, 1986, 1987.) And, like the children in Margaret's classes as a whole, they spoke different varieties of English and talked of strikingly different home neighborhoods.

Despite this diversity, the children in Margaret's classes became a collective. Margaret did not specifically ask the children to help each other with academic or other tasks, but she expected them to share experiences, ideas, and, at times, possessions (like extra hangers and plant pots for class projects); she talked frequently of their past experiences together--their evolving class history. (Indeed, she would tell them about children who had been in her class doing journals 14 years earlier.) During journal time, she accepted their chatter as the normal by-product of children together, and she gave them opportunities to formally share their work. Thus, Margaret established the structure within which a community of children could grow and in which children might use writing--and, particularly, their journal entries--as a helpful tool within their evolving social and intellectual life.

## THE ANALYSIS PROCEDURES: THE DISCOVERY OF MULTIPLE WORLDS

When I first began visiting Margaret's room, I did not have this broad perspective, this notion of multiple worlds. I was initially interested primarily in how writing came to have a symbolic niche in children's artistic lives--that is, in how the liveliness of their drawing and talking came to exist within their writing. So, I examined the set of "composing events" compiled for each individual child. For each composing event--each time the child was observed composing a journal entry--I had the child's drawn picture, an audiotape of talk, and the completed written text. (See Figure 2, Part A.) I focused only on talk that seemed "task involved"--directly relevant to the world the child was constructing. (For a detailed description of data analysis procedures, see Dyson, 1986.)

FIGURE 2
The Children's Talk: References to Multiple Worlds



I compared how children built worlds of actors, actions, and objects through drawing and talk--and how they then tried to create similar or at least compatible space/time worlds in written text. And I began to sense the tensions that can exist among these media. For example, when children finished drawing and began writing, their pictures existed in the present right before them, but any talk and dramatic gestures that had accompanied the drawing were now past. Space/time tensions could result, as in Jesse's piece: "This is the motorcycle guy [a description of his picture]. And then the motorcycle guy won [a record of past told and dramatized action]."

As I continued to follow the children, their relationships with each other grew. And I began to realize that I could not tell the story of any one child's growth as a writer without including the stories of other children as well. The children's imaginary worlds were increasingly embedded within their ongoing social world. (See Figure 2, Part B.) Thus, there were two new kinds of talk to attend to--talk involving others in one's own world, and talk involving oneself in others' worlds.

As the children interacted through their texts with each other, new tensions occurred. Children wrestled with the border between their imaginary worlds, on the one hand, and their ongoing social world, on the other. Their struggles left little footprints in their texts--shifts of tense and of person or stance. Listen to Mitzi's text about a drawn cowboy:

> Once there was a cowboy. I hated the cowboy a lot. Do You LIke cowboy's? but I like YOu a lot. Sometimes I LIke The cowboy. Tuesdays I like The cowboy. The End.

In this piece, Mitzi begins as an apparently third-person observer of an imaginary world and then leaves that stance to extend a first person invitation to "you" to enter into her story with her.

Finally, the children's comments on each other's work led to talk that was task-related--talk about the wider experienced world of people, places, events, and things. (See Figure 2, Part C.) The children's imaginary worlds were thus increasingly embedded within yet another world. This embedding, too, could lead to clashes, as the children wrestled with how true experiences and personal opinions figured into their "made-up" worlds. Here is another of Mitzi's pieces. To appreciate it, you must realize that Mitzi had a little brother, whom she loved, but not always:

> Once there was a girl. I like the girl. I hate the Girls Brother a Lot. The End.

In the kindergarten and early first grade, most of the children's talk about each others' worlds or about the wider world of experiences happened during drawing. The children's written products were often controlled by their pictures--their written texts had little independent existence. As I will illustrate, children's talk with each other about their imaginary worlds seemed important for both loosening the texts' ties to drawing and for embedding those texts in the peer social world and in the wider experienced world. And that embedding posed, for all the children, these challenging questions:

> How do meanings formulated in colorful drawings and/or lively talk "fit" onto the flat symbolic surface of written text?

How does one interact socially with others through written monologues?

How does one make up "pretend" stories about "real" experiences?

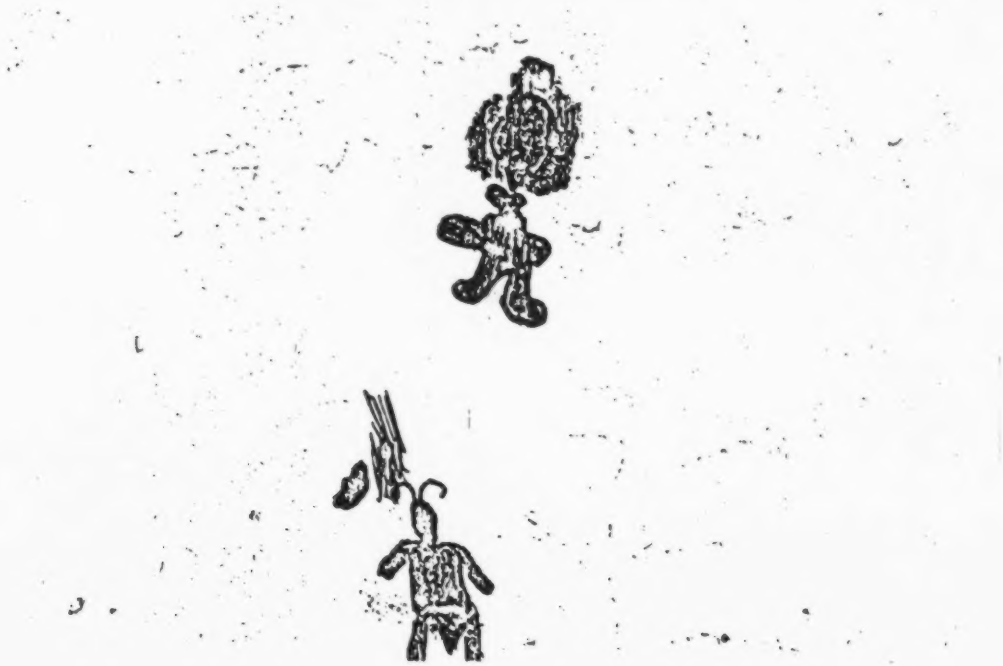
How, in brief, does one negotiate among multiple worlds? Let me show you how Jake and Mitzi confronted and then began to resolve these challenges.

## JAKE

I begin with Jake. Jake was easy to locate in his crowded classroom, as he was a talkative, outgoing class member. His world, as he talked about it, centered on the fast-paced, the adventurous, the dramatic. He knew which baseball players were "helluva" good ones. He reported regularly on the wrestler Hulk Hogan's adventures, and was quite aware of the troubles in his neighborhood in "the crazy part . . . the middle" of the city, where, in his view, some bad guys--"bad peoples"--try to get away with bad deeds, and good people call the police, who sometimes save the day.

Jake's dramatic and very social style was quite evident during journal time. In the first grade, Jake began each entry by drawing--and by talking. His imaginary worlds evolved during drawing, as he narrated and dramatized the actions of adventurous men and powerful vehicles, especially jets. His raised voice captured his peers' attention. And then his imaginary and his social world often meshed, as his friends entered his story with him, leading Jake to elaborate and extend his plot. Listen, for a moment, to the lively talk that surrounded the drawing in Figure 3:

FIGURE 3
Jake's Robot Man and Flying Earthling



Jake has just drawn the ground and the sky and--

Jake: Now I'm gonna make a mechanical man.

Manuel, sensible and calm, seeks some clarification:

Manuel: A mechanical man? You mean a robot man?

Jake: Yeah. I'm gonna make a robot man. You got it, Manuel.

Jake begins to elaborate in his talk and in his picture:

Jake: Here's a bomb head. It's gonna explode. It hasn't even exploded yet. When it does--

Manuel's a bit concerned:

Manuel: I hope it explodes in the next century.

Jake: Here comes the bomb explosion! There is the fire, a little smoke.
. . .
It's gonna explode in the next few days.

Manuel: I hope it happens on the weekend and then I won't be around.

Jake: Not for long this school will be around.

Although Jake told dynamic narratives while drawing--and sometimes he even planned dynamic written narratives--his actual written texts simply described his pictures. During writing, Jake struggled with encoding his words--figuring out some words for himself, asking peers and available adults for others. In the time-consuming encoding process, Jake leaned for support on his completed pictures: "I copy offa the picture." Thus, his texts tended to be stuck in the space/time frame of those pictures. Indeed, only one of the collected 14 first grade journal entries involved movement over time. During the event in which he narrated the adventures of the "robot man" and the "flying earthling," he wrote:

> Once upon a time there were two men. One was flying up in to the clouds. The other man was staying on the ground. The and

Perhaps because he was so focused on encoding, Jake did not initiate talk about his *written* text with his friends--nor did he comment on others' texts. But, during the third month of observation, Jake's peers began to critique his writing. Jake frequently reread his story, often to find his place in his text after a struggle with encoding. During those rereadings, a peer might overhear his story and then comment on the story's language or logic. In that way, Jake's peers could turn his attention from spelling to the sense of his text world. In the following example, Jake had not reread his story but, rather, orally planned the text he intended to write to accompany a picture (see Figure 4a, next page). The reaction he received from his friends, however, is illustrative:

> One day I saw a tiger jet going over the desert, and it bombed the, the, the desert, and the desert made a volcano and the volcano erupted and the, all of the people that lived on the um desert were DEAD from the volcano.

FIGURE 4a
Picture to Accompany Jake's Planned Tiger Jet Text

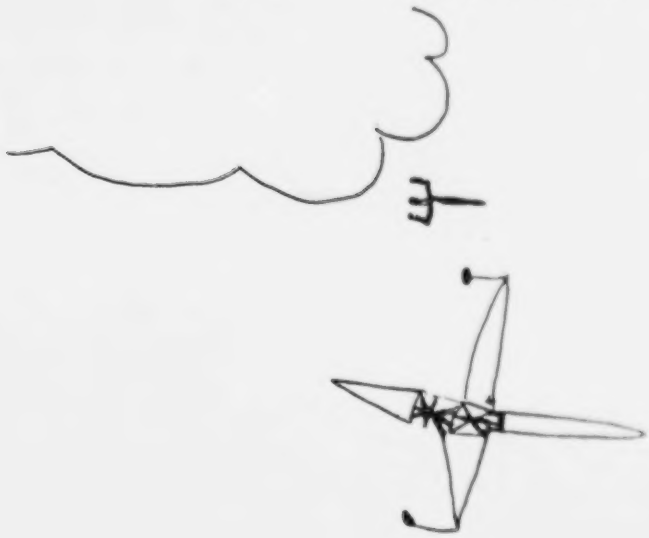


FIGURE 4b
Jake's Actual Written Tiger Jet Text

I saw a jet Flying
over the desert. And
the little jet
almost got away.
But the little jet is
trying to get
away.

Jake's classmate Hawkeye objected to this story, in part because of Jake's drawing:

Hawkeye: That can't happen! Volcanoes are made out of rock, not sand! Plus the lava in the volcano comes from the center of the earth. That doesn't come from that. You have to draw a hole all the way down to the center of the earth. That'd make a volcano out of sand.

Jake: Uh huh. Look. You bomb something and you pull it out.

Peter: Uh huh.

Hawkeye: Yeah, but you can't make a volcano out of sand.

Manuel finally tries to settle things:

Manuel: Well, anyway, it's a pretend story. In real life, it may be true.

This episode illustrates how Jake as writer was confronted by the multiple worlds within which he had to act--and within which his text had to exist. His told *imaginary world*, set in the past, was being responded to by his friends within the context of the present *social world*; his imaginary world affected others' behaviors toward him--it had social consequences. Further, his written text was being questioned in part because it didn't seem compatible with his picture (i.e., according to Hawkeye, a bomb would have to be drawn well into the earth so that it could touch lava): the *differing symbolic worlds* did not comfortably mesh. Finally, the basis for the argument was whether or not the imagined world was sensible, given their knowledge of the *wider experienced world*--the perceived real world. The resolution to their argument, suggested Manuel, lay in trying to figure out exactly how true "not-true" stories were supposed to be--in figuring out how Jake the author should negotiate between real and imaginary worlds.

In his second grade year, Jake began to negotiate among the symbolic, social, and experienced worlds in new ways, and these new ways led to three significant changes in his texts. The first major change was the *liberation of Jake's texts from their domination by drawing*. The path to that liberation was forged by the bubble car. During the first observations of Jake in the second grade, he invented this marvelous vehicle, which was propelled by blowing giant bubbles (see Figure 5, next page). While drawing, Jake dramatized the bubble car adventures for himself and his friends. These bubble cars were daring--they could fly in the air, blow up other vehicles, and meet disastrous results themselves.

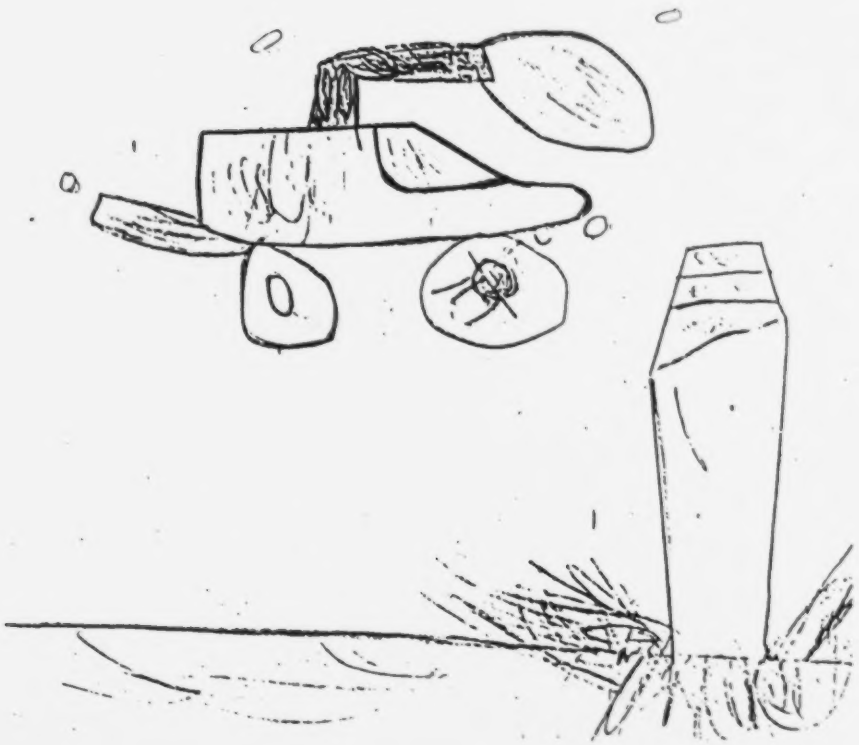
During writing Jake now commented occasionally on his written message, rather than only on his spelling (in part, perhaps, because his struggle with encoding had eased). Once he explicitly voiced his intention to try to capture within his written text the just-drawn and dramatized adventure of two bubble cars and a jet (see Figure 6a, Page 12):

> I'm gonna make all the col--things in it: road, run out of gas, gonna get shot down and crash. [Now Jake is writing here, not drawing.] . . . I'm really getting into "Keechew, keechew, peeehew, oochew" [sound effects].

Jake's completed entry was:

> Once there was a wierd space ship and a bublble car. Then two of the bubble cars is going to get blown up. and the other buble car is running out of gasline. But the jet is going to crasht. The end.

FIGURE 5
Jake's Bubble Car



Jake's completed text was still clearly within his picture frame--although it was pushing against the edges of that frame. Note, for example, that he predicted the eventual blowing up of the bubble car (which had, in fact, blown up in his talk before writing). But, while this text did not actually break through a picture frame, it did break through Jake's one-page/one-picture-per-story pattern. The text was quite lengthy--it covered three lined pages. In Jake's words, "This is the longest story I've ever wrote." Its length meant that, after writing, Jake had two additional pictures to draw. And in these pictures, Jake depicted the vehicles' actions over time. This was a turning point in Jake's history, because his text world began to assume dominance over his drawings: because of his text, Jake used his drawings in a narrative or story-like way, to depict a series of related happenings (see Figures 6a, b, 7a,b, 8a,b on the following pages).

Jake was clearly proud of his bubble car creations and of his long story. "Who made up the bubble cars?" he quizzed his peers one day. And, when the answer was not forthcoming--"*I* made up the bubble cars." Jake's bubble cars and his bubble car stories indeed gained public--or at least the class's--attention. One day when he stood before the class to read his journal, shouts of "bubble cars" rang out. And Sonia even suggested that Jake might be famous by the time he was ten because of his marvelous invention.

FIGURE 6a
Picture Drawn First During Jake's Bubble Cars and Jet Adventure

FIGURE 6b
Text Page Written First During Jake's Bubble Cars and Jet Adventure

Onc+ there

was a wierd

space ship and

a bubble car.

FIGURE 7a
Picture Drawn Second During Jake's Bubble Cars and Jet Adventure

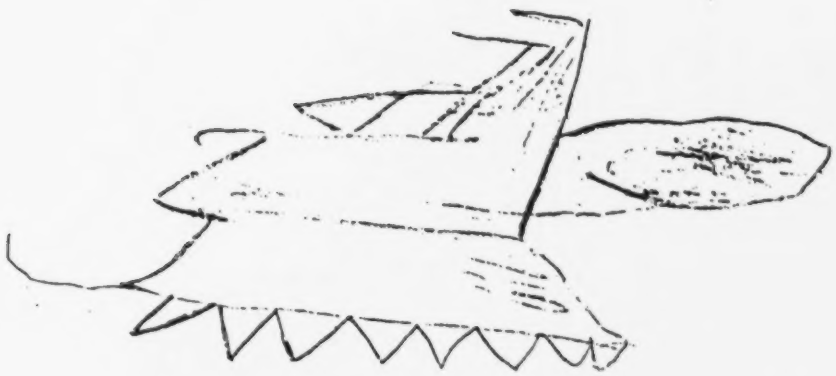


FIGURE 7b
Text Page Written Second During Jake's Bubble Cars and Jet Adventure

two of the bubble
cars is going
to get blown up
and the other
bubble car is running out

FIGURE 8a
Picture Drawn Third During Jake's Bubble Cars and Jet Adventure

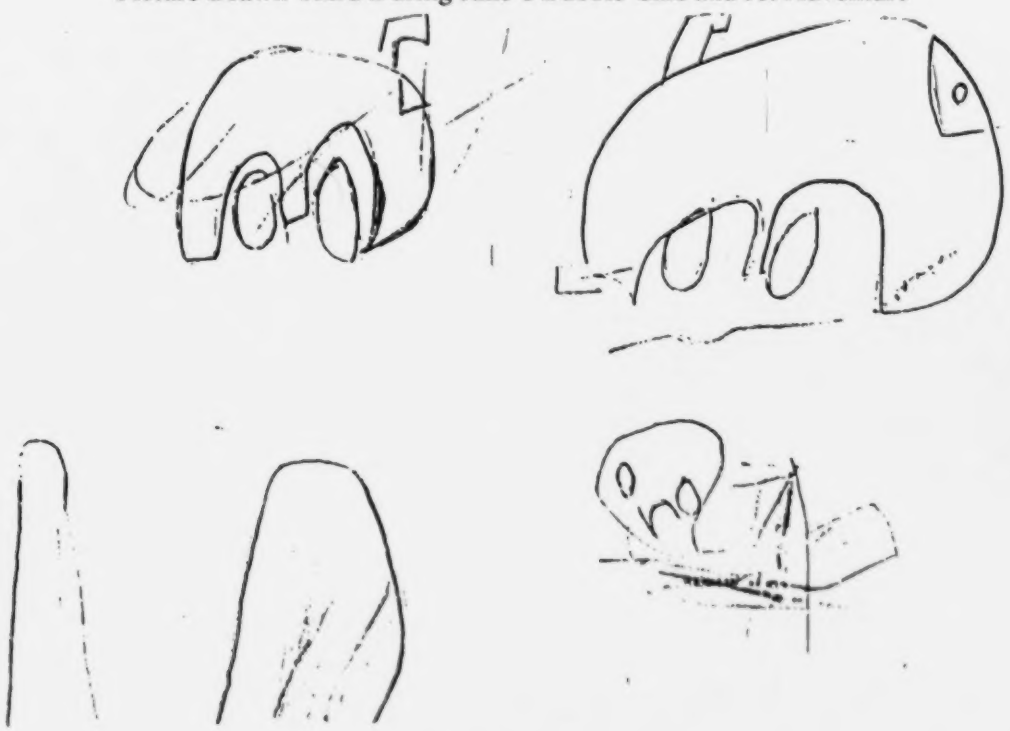


FIGURE 8b
Text Written Third During Jake's Bubble Cars and Jet Adventure

of gasiine
But The jet
12 going to
C ras ht

So, Jake's imaginary worlds were well received within his social world--and, perhaps in part because of this, he kept them up. Jake's bubble car story became his script. Each day he wrote a variation of "Once there was a bubble car that is going to be destroyed." This repetition made drawing before writing unnecessary. It also allowed Jake to attain greater writing fluency. Jake became quite fast at writing--which he regularly pointed out to his peers.

Although Jake and his friends enjoyed the bubble car adventures, his teacher, Margaret, was understandably becoming concerned. She asked him to please write about something else. And Jake, also understandably, found this difficult, as he explained:

Jake: It's [writing] not as easy as you really think it is nowadays, cause you see, now I can't be writing about my bubble car all the time.

Manuel: Why?

Jake: Cause Margaret says so.

Manuel: She doesn't want any bubble car stories?

Jake: Yeah.

Jesse: She hates 'em.

Jake: No, she doesn't. She's getting tired of 'em. That's all. That's why they're not as easy as they used to be.

Jake, however, soon came upon a solution--Manuel stories. Jake's selection of Manuel was surprising but sensible. Manuel was a friend of his and, in addition, Manuel was himself admired within the peer group. During the time that Jake was becoming famous for his bubble cars, Manuel was becoming famous for his "snowman" story, a beautifully illustrated story that took up his whole journal. So Jake announced his intention to take up his whole journal with Manuel. Here is the conversation within which the decision was announced:

Sonia: That's good, Manuel. (admiring Manuel's entry)

Manuel: Thanks.

Sonia: How long is that story? The whole book?

Jake: Yeah.

Manuel: It's gonna be the whole book.

Jake: I think I'm gonna write about Manuel in the whole book.

Jesse: Yeah, I'm gonna--

Jake: I think I'm gonna write the rest of the book about this story, "Me and Manuel."

The incorporation of a peer into Jake's texts led to the second major change in Jake's writing. The dramatic and narrative language that had accompanied Jake's drawing--including his dialogue with his peers--now began to accompany and, moreover, to be incorporated into his text. He used his texts, rather than only his drawings, to interact within his social world. And thus, ***his texts became true narratives--they moved through time***. For example, listen to Jake threatening Manuel's existence within the imaginary world he is writing. (You might recall here the earlier described first grade composing event in which Jake threatened Manuel's existence while *drawing*.):

Jake: (to Manuel) I'm deadly. I am deadly. I'm gonna put your name in this story and you are gonna be dead too. I'm gonna make sure you get blown to pieces. (laughs)

Manuel: Blown to pieces. (softly and a bit awed)

Jake: Yes, sir. You won't be able to see your mommy ever again.

Manuel playfully retaliates:

Manuel: In my story you're going to meet a magician who's going to turn *you* into a snowman.

Jake: Well, actually, guess wha--

Manuel: And melt you in the sun.

Jake seems to back down:

Jake: Actually, um, I I'm, I--we're gonna, I'm writing about um us flying the fastest jet in the world.

. . .

None of us--both uf us are--isn't gonna get blown to pieces because it's the fastest jet--it can outrun any bullet.

Manuel: Oh wow! I like that.

Jake: And it's as bullet-proof as it can get.

But later:

Jake: Watch out Manuel! (writes *blow up*)

Manuel: Just at the very end when they're just so happy, it's almost--they're just so happy and they read the entire story and they loved it, I get blown up.

Jake: Yeah.

Manuel: And they cry and cry and cry and cry--it's so dramatic.

Later, Jake reads his story to Manuel:

Once there was a boy that is named Manuel. Manuel is going to fly the fastest jet and I am going to fly the jet too. But Manuel's headquarters

> is going to blow up But I am OK. But I don't know about Manuel but I am going to find Manuel. But when I find him I like him. But I think I see him. He is in the jet. Manuel are you OK? Yes I am OK. you are being attacked. I will shoot the bad guys out of the universe. OK yes shoot them now. The end.

In the above example, Jake was using his written texts to interact within his ongoing social world in more deliberate ways than he did in the first grade. But his peers, especially Manuel, were still assisting him, highlighting conflicts between multiple worlds: the imaginary world was separate from the real perceived world ("In my *story*," asserts Manuel, you shall have problems of your own); and the imaginary world was separate as well from the social world in which the piece would eventually be read ("Just at the very end when they're [the readers] so happy. . . I get blown up."). Further, the example illustrates how the tension between these multiple worlds could be evident within the text; Jake tried to create a past imagined world, but then found himself within the present world he was sharing with Manuel.

The above example also illustrates the third development in Jake's written entries. In the first grade, Jake wrote about the observed actions of the dominant figures in his drawings. In the second grade, Jake's entry into his pieces as a character led to *the incorporation of the internal worlds of his characters--their thoughts and feelings* (e.g., "I am OK. But I don't know about Manuel.").

By the end of the second grade year, Jake was able to move through fictional time, without including himself or a peer and without ongoing dramatization. His written imaginary worlds seemed to be built from the elements (the actors, actions, objects) and the dialogues of his earlier dramatic play and drawing--but his text worlds were no longer dominated by those media. Listen to Jake's talk to himself during the last observed composing event:

Jake has just written:

> Once there was a men there from planet X and they are controlling the world.

He then remarks:

> Uh, I got to think of a counter. I got to think of something that's from, that's in the world. Uh, let's see.

So, on his own, Jake reflects on his text, reaching out to the "real" world for help in forming his imaginary one. Then Jake thinks of a "counter" and continues writing:

> But the Russians had a buble car and the bubble car is going to America.

Jake did not engage in social play with Manuel as he constructed this piece nor did he argue about the real world with Hawkeye--but echoes of those earlier conversations were there as Jake interacted with and critiqued his own text in search of action and sense.

**MITZI**

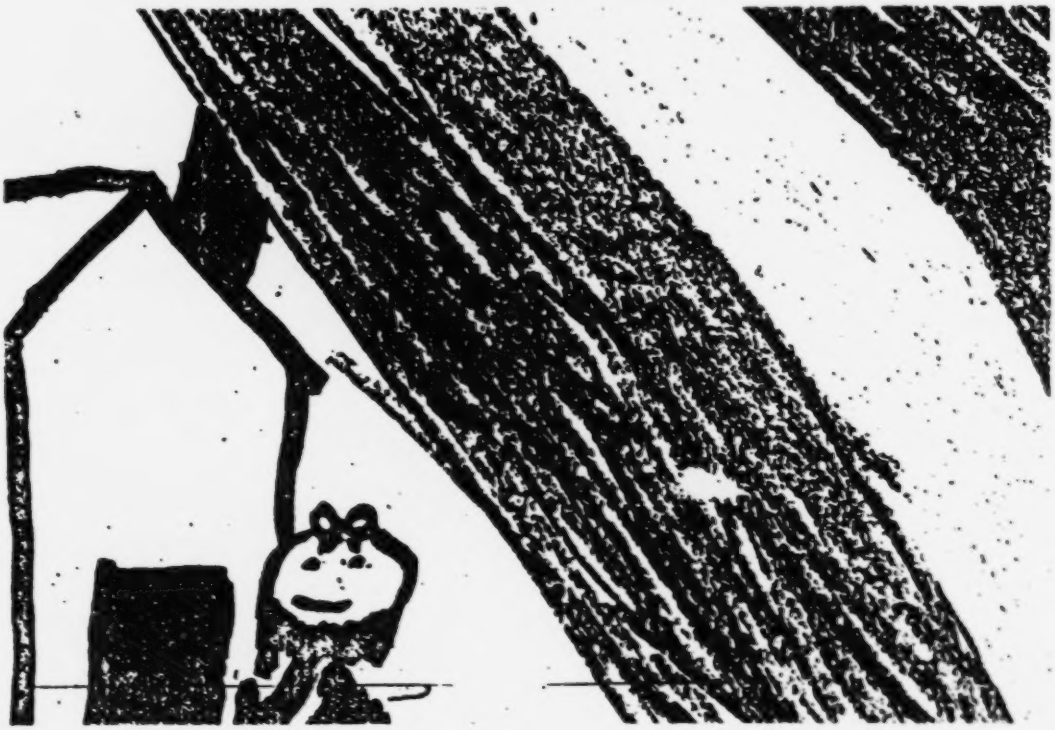
Mitzi's texts, like Jake's, developed in similar ways, as they became the center of social interactions and intellectual debates--as they became more embedded in her worlds.

But, since Mitzi had different concerns and different interactive and artistic styles, the precise nature of her negotiation among multiple worlds was different too.

Mitzi was a tall, slender child with a low, soft voice and a straightforward manner. While Jake dramatized fast-paced adventures, Mitzi displayed her concerns about her friends and her family. She took her relationships very seriously. Tears and hurt looks followed perceived injustices, like a friend failing to sit next to her when the opportunity was clearly present.

During the first grade, Mitzi generally began a journal entry by drawing a picture of a little girl against a background. While drawing, she did talk with her peers, but, unlike Jake's talk, Mitzi's talk was not directly involved in her ongoing drawing. She talked about her family and friends--whom she liked (Jenni or Sonia) and whom she hated (her brother). While writing, she typically labeled her pictures and then stated that she--or "you"--likes, hates, might like, or might be liked by the depicted figures. Most of Mitzi's texts--86% (19 of 22)--contained no movement through time. And, in over half (59%) of her texts, she shifted her stance as author from an observer of an imaginary world set in the past to a sociable actor in the present. Here is an example:

FIGURE 9
Mitzi's Girl Under the Rainbow



Once There was a girl
She might like You.
She liveds under a rainbow.
I like You. The End

While the process of producing written texts was no doubt eased by Mitzi's repetitive "I like's," her products were not simply texts of convenience. They reflected, as did her talk, her concern with relationships.

Not surprisingly, then, peer relationships figured into her writing development. Just as Jake's friends began to question him about his texts, so did Mitzi's. And her friends, too, pursued the connection between the real and the imaginary world:

> Mitzi has worked intensively on a large, carefully detailed picture of a mean-looking witch. (See Figure 10, next page.) She is quite pleased with her drawing, remarking that it is her "favorite story." She now begins to write:
>
> Once there was a witch.
> She is my mom.
>
> Mitzi may be feeling uneasy about referring to the witch as her mother, for she now writes:
>
> I love my mom
>
> Bessie and Jenni, who are sitting near by, seem to be concerned about Mitzi's text as well:
>
> Bessie: You shouldn't share it [with the class].
>
> Mitzi: She's a bad witch. (pointing to her picture)
>
> Jenni: Then you're a bad girl.
>
> Perhaps a little girl who writes that her own mother is a witch is a bad child indeed, from Jenni's point of view. Mitzi seems to interpret Jenni's statement similarly:
>
> Mitzi: No, I'm not. I might not even like my mom, or I love my mom.
>
> At this point, Mitzi draws a conversation bubble next to her drawn witch and writes:
>
> I am bad.

In this example, the varied worlds Mitzi moved among as a writer were quite visible. There was the present two-dimensional "story" of the carefully drawn witch and the overlapping "once-there-was" world she began to shape with written words; these symbolic worlds were embedded within the ongoing peer social world and, also, within her wider experienced world, for her feelings about her mom pulled in the world beyond the classroom walls.

Moreover, Mitzi's friends were here demonstrating how social relationships can be mediated by written worlds. Authors do not only directly represent or comment on their feelings in their texts (e.g., "I like you"); authors' imaginary worlds can also affect others' behaviors toward them--written texts are sites of social interaction, not just individuals' representations.

FIGURE 10
Mitzi's Mean-Looking Witch

In the second grade, Mitzi, like Jake, developed more sophisticated ways of moving among multiple worlds--among multiple space/time structures. And, as a result of these new ways of negotiating among worlds, her texts changed as well. Mitzi brought her imaginary and social worlds closer together. She began to spontaneously share her texts with her peers, as entertaining them with her stories became socially more important. And, like Jake, she began to more directly involve friends and family as characters in her written texts. She included herself as the character "I" and then used the narrative form to dynamically play out her relationships with others. So, in the second grade, *Mitzi's texts*, like Jake's, *more often moved through time*.

Further, fictionalizing herself and those close to her seemed to help *Mitzi*, as it helped Jake, *create texts that conveyed the internal world of her characters*. Now it was not only she (the "I") who liked and hated--but her characters as well.

Finally, *Mitzi's drawings*, also like Jake's, *became illustrations of her written texts*, although those drawings often added elements of meaning, especially feelings, not conveyed by the texts themselves.

These three changes--imaginary worlds that more frequently involved movement through time, the inclusion of characters' feelings, and the texts' increased domination over drawing--are illustrated in the following example:

Mitzi has begun writing:

> Me and My Dream
>
> I had a dream and My dream was a Big Nightmare and This is My Nightmare. Once there was a boy

Mitzi stops and erases *boy*. She turns to Jenni:

Mitzi: Now this is going to be a true dream.
. . .
This is a nightmare I once had and the girl was you.

Jenni: Yeah?

Mitzi: And you really hated me.

Jenni: No wonder it's a nightmare.

The ideas discussed with Jenni appear in Mitzi's completed story, which vacillates between the past and the present:

> I had a dream and My dream was a BiG NiGhtMare. and This is My NiGhtMare. Once there was a Girl and her name was Jenni and she hated Me. But I do not know why. and she had a magic bulb. her bulb was a very powerful bulb. It was so powerful it turned Me into a Powerful bulb and now she has Two Powerfull Bulbs. The one that is Me is even Powerfuller than the other one. The End.

As soon as she finished her text, Mitzi turned to Jenni:

> OK, want me to read this to you? It's very funny.

Mitzi's accompanying picture fleshed out the fanciful quality of her dream. (See Figure 11, next page.) In the text, Jenni is simply Jenni with a magical bulb; in the picture, Jenni has witch-like nose and hands and is saying "He, He, He"; the bulbs look like crystal balls.

Fictionalizing real people and real experiences highlighted the relationship between the imaginary world and the real world and the issue of truth in fiction--a consistent concern for Mitzi in the second grade. Most troublesome was the problem of how to begin her journal entries. Throughout the first grade and into the second, Mitzi began all her pieces with a variation of "Once upon a time"-- even those that were true: "Once there was a girl that was me that was named Mitzi."

FIGURE 11
Mitzi's Nightmare

The following piece, written in mid-April of her second grade year, was Mitzi's first imaginative piece that did not begin with a variation of "Once there was"--above the piece Mitzi wrote "Not True" in small letters. In the piece, entitled "How My Life Was," Mitzi had a twin sister. (In real life, her friend Jenni had a twin brother.) And this twin sister seemed intent on committing a great offense--one that greatly upset Mitzi in "real" life--telling another's secret:

> I said to my sister one day that I was going to run away. My sister screamed, "Oh no." My mother and father ran down the stairs. "What happened" they said. My sister was beginning to say that I was going to run away When I ran across the room and covered her Mouth. The End. [In the accompanying picture are two little girls, one labeled "me," the other, "my twin."]

Although Mitzi continued to mark imaginative stories "not true," she had become both more flexible and more conventional about openings and about her texts in general. She no longer began true written texts about friends or family with "once there was," and she began her imaginative texts in varied ways and, also, consistently wrote them in past tense. So, she was more comfortable with the relationship between the real and the imaginary worlds, even those imaginary worlds that conveyed the essence of the real one (as the most compelling imaginary worlds may do).

In the final observed event of year two, Mitzi wrote a deceptively simple text about cats. In this piece, as in Jake's last piece, Mitzi's stance is that of a distant observer, rather than an involved actor. Yet the threads to her earlier "I like you's" are visible in her talk, as she moves in a sophisticated fashion among the imaginary, the social, and the experienced world:

> Mitzi's friends have been writing about cats, and, on this day, Mitzi wants to write about cats too. The topic of her imaginary world seems to provide a social link to

Jenni, who consistently writes about cats. Days earlier, Mitzi wrote the title for the entry. So she knows that the story has to have something to do with "The Surprise Party."

Mitzi: Jenni, what can I write about? Um, I'm thinking about cats. It's gonna be a surprise party about cats. What should I write about? You're good, you're good at that. You're good at this [i.e., writing about cats], Jenni. Jenni you're good at that! (pause) I know! A bird that'll go and kill a cat!

Yahmya: A vulture?

Mitzi: No! They're my made-up cats. Once I made up some cats. Once I made up some cats. And there were some birds. Birds! And they eat'em too.

Yahmya: They eat CATS?

Mitzi: Mm mmm.

Mitzi seemed to be trying to justify her story to Yahmya by clearly separating her imaginary world from the real one ("They're my made-up cats."). When Mitzi finally begins writing, however, she writes about cats that eat birds. Perhaps Yahmya's critique of the reverse situation has made her reconsider. After writing her piece, Mitzi begins drawing a tree and soon realizes that she needs "dead birds down here" under her tree.

Jenni: Cats?

Mitzi: Yeah--listen:

"Once there was a bunch of cats. Then all of a sudden there came a flock of birds. This was a BIG surprise to the cats. At once the cats started to kill them.

Jenni suggests a strategy for avoiding a picture full of dead birds:

Jenni: You can put some flying away up here.

Mitzi pauses and then has yet another thought:

Mitzi: No, I know what I'm going to do.

Mitzi then adds "and eat them" to the last line of her text, eliminating the need for dead birds. She draws one bird; it's crying as it hovers near the tree.

In this event, Mitzi produced a carefully coordinated picture and text that combined to tell a sensible, imaginary tale to her interested, inquisitive friends. As the event illustrates, Mitzi had progressed from "I like you" journal entries surrounded by social talk to written worlds in which characters liked, hated, were surprised and saddened, betrayed and befriended. Her journey to dynamic literary worlds was mediated, like Jake's, by her interaction with her supportive, if critical, peers.

## CONCLUSION: EMBEDDING WRITING WITHIN MULTIPLE WORLDS

We sometimes describe learning to write as learning to create worlds of words that exist on their own, disembedded from sensible human contexts. But the children observed in this project suggested another way to think about writing growth: Writing (and fictional writing in particular) takes root and develops as it becomes embedded in children's lives--as it becomes a way of understanding their own experiences and of interacting with others. It was, for example, Jake's friendship with Manuel that infused and expanded his texts, and Mitzi's concerns about her friends' opinions that tempered her texts.

In this growth, however, there are struggles. Worlds first discovered through talk and pictures do not so easily fit on a page. Current feelings and past experiences must be transformed if they are to find expression within imaginary worlds. And, to add to the challenge, those imaginary worlds, often set in the distant past, are the author's means for interacting with future (and, for these young authors, with their present, sitting-right-beside-them) readers. What confusing challenges of time and space.

To meet these challenges, children observed in this project, including Mitzi and Jake, found new ways of using the resources offered by these multiple worlds; they drew, talked, and interacted with their peers in new ways (see Table 2). Most strikingly, they brought their imagined worlds in close. They embodied themselves, their friends, and their experiences as elements within their imaginative worlds. In that way, they could find firmer ground upon which to act, feel, and move forward within the imaginative world, while maintaining connections with the ongoing social world and the wider experienced world.

TABLE 2
Changes in Children's Imaginative Texts
as Supported by Drawing and Talking with Peers

1. More frequent movement through time
   - --Sequencing pictures to capture movement
   - --Incorporating talk (dialogue) into texts
2. Inclusion of characters' feelings
   - --Fictionalizing self, peers, and experiences
3. Drawing more often serving text
   - --Writing before drawing
   - --Basing both text and picture on scripts (action sequences) developed from play, exposure to books, television, daily living

As an educator, children's struggles with multiple worlds do not worry me. I do worry, though, about children who do not confront these border clashes--children for whom the world of the text and their own worlds seem not to connect. I think here of Rueben, who, from kindergarten on, covered his pictures and texts with his arms and head whenever peers showed interest in them. While Rueben would talk with his friends about spellings and letter names, the content of his journal entries was private business. The tensions felt by Mitzi and Jake were not felt by Rueben. And his stories did not reflect the drama, the emotion, the world clashes of Mitzi's and Jake's.

I think too of a skilled teacher, Howard Banford (1987). A number of Howard's second graders had been writing "This is a _____," "I like _____," and other list-like stories. Howard influenced the structure of his children's stories, not by giving them lessons in story writing strategies, but by changing the role of writing in the children's social lives at school. Influenced by Vivian Paley (1981), he had his students use their stories as scripts for dramas to be acted out with friends. And then the frequency of the list-like texts declined, and in their stead appeared adventures suitable for actor friends. Writing figured in a different way into their lives, and so it changed.

To conclude, as we as teachers plan for the children in our care, we need to focus on more than children's products and writing processes. We must examine their social processes--the health of the classroom communities that we help create and individual children's comfort within those communities. We might consider the opportunities we provide for children to interact, not only about but during writing, and we might consider the social groupings that might make a difference for individual children--a special writing partner or small group, for example. For it is the children themselves and their relationships with each other that, for many of them, can provide the key to school writing growth. Our goal, then, is to assist children in finding supportive, comfortable worlds within which their writing might make a difference to other people and to themselves. And then that writing may take root, grow, embed.

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